You Say You Want a Revolution? Changing Japanese University Entrance Examinations

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Abstract

This research is a partial report on a country-wide survey in Japan of tertiary-level expatriate (Holliday, 1992) English-language teachers' beliefs and opinions about entrance examinations and their creation. Guided by grounded theory, this qualitative study highlights factors which constrain or facilitate changes to these tests and, drawing on participants' experiences as well as literature on organizational practice in Japan, offers a number of recommendations that might be useful for expatriate faculty members to consider when they wish to make changes to their institution's examinations, such as having a complete understanding of the purpose of an institution's entrance examination, being able to demonstrate why changes to the test might be necessary, understanding one's role on the test committee, and seeking help from like-minded colleagues in a position to effect change. These recommendations may also prove useful to other expatriate English-teaching faculty working alongside Japanese (local) (Holliday, 1992) faculty in host tertiary institutions worldwide, as well as those responsible for training English-as-a-Foreign-Language (EFL) teachers who expect to work abroad.

Keywords

expatriate ELT faculty, entrance examination, institutional behavior, test validity and reliability

Introduction

The purpose of this study, part of a larger country-wide survey of expatriate faculty beliefs about entrance examinations, was twofold: to determine those factors which constrain or promote change to the English portion of university entrance examinations in Japan, as well as to offer suggestions to expatriate educators seeking to change their institutions' entrance examinations for what they believe to be the better. From qualitative data collection method and analysis methods, the voices of 12 expatriate tertiary English-teaching faculty members reveal perceived obstacles or facilitators of change to their institutions' tests. A look at literature on Japanese institutional behavior offers suggestions to aid English educators in effecting improvements. For the purpose of this research, "expatriate" colleagues refers to those born and raised in countries other than the one they work in, while "local" colleagues refers to those born and raised in the country within which they work.

When speaking of English entrance examinations generally, it seems that expatriate English-teaching colleagues tend to express concerns related to test validity and reliability, and even now in Japan it is not unusual to hear sentiments similar to those expressed to Leonard (1998) by J.D. Brown in an interview:

> Why is it that Japan has 300 exams or more? These exams are being made by people who don't know what they're doing, who say they don't know what they're doing. They are doing the best they can, but ultimately they don't know what they're doing. They are preparing tests that are haphazard and of unknown reliability and validity. (n.p.)

Is there, on the one hand, an apparent acceptance by local (Holliday, 1992) (Japanese) colleagues of a seemingly random approach to test design? Are expatriate colleagues generally more critical

of entrance examinations and seeking therefore to change them? Or, do local English-teaching colleagues perceive these tests in different ways from their expatriate English-teaching colleagues from the outset?

Two accounts, one of Brown (Leonard, 1998), and the other of Murphey (2004) illustrate the experiences of expatriate English instructors attempting to improve the validity – whether a test measures what it is supposed to (Harmer, 2005) - and reliability – whether test scores are consistent (Bachman & Palmer, 1996) - of English entrance examinations in Japan. Both indicated that their task was difficult and, for the most part, unwelcomed at Japanese tertiary institutions. In an attempt to solve problems related to validity and reliability, Brown recommended doing statistical analyses of the results each year since piloting test questions is a sensitive issue due to security (Leonard, 1998). In a later article, in which Brown described himself as "ever-persistent" in his desire to not only critique but also improve the situation in Japan, he recommended a detailed series of steps in four areas: test design strategies, test content strategies, logistical strategies, and interpretation strategies (Brown, 2000) In spite of these recommendations, he reported that he had been repeatedly criticized for his attempts to improve the quality of university English entrance examinations**,** and moreover that he was "ignorant of the Japanese perspective" (p. 2) and was accused of practicing "cultural imperialism" (ibid).

Tim Murphey writes about his struggles as a tenured professor to change one university's English entrance examination for what he believed to be the better. When he was finally offered a chance to chair the entrance examination committee, he said he would do so only on the provision that he be provided with examination data from previous years to analyze (Murphey, 2004). Using recommended statistical methods (Brown, 1996), Murphey found that a low number of discrete-point vocabulary and grammar questions fit the criteria for good

questions, as did a moderate amount of reading questions, yet a high a number of listening questions fit the criteria but were granted less weight than questions on other sections. Murphey reported the findings to his colleagues, yet no changes were made either to the test or score weightings. In the end, out of frustration, he resigned from that position.

It appears that Brown and Murphy experienced dissatisfaction with the Japanese university English examination system, and although they have made attempts to make improvements as they deemed necessary, have been stymied in one way or another and, in the case of Brown, accused of not knowing the "Japanese way" of going about things**.** Because there are few other accounts of expatriate English-instructor voices in the English examination construction process, this exploratory research seeks to understand what roles foreign faculty play with regards to construction of their university's English entrance examinations, what they believe about the examinations in general, and whether they have been successful at changing their university's English entrance examinations.

Literature review

University Entrance Examinations: Claims and counterclaims

It has been suggested that that declining student populations are forcing universities to re-think and perhaps relax their entrance requirements in order to keep their classes full (Kamiya, 2009; Kinmonth, 2005). However, although students may be able to enter non-top-tier schools (Mulvey, 2001), for those who wish to enter universities with higher rankings, "examination hell" will continue to be a reality (Kinmonth, 2005; Mori, 2002; Takeuchi, 1997).

Much has been written on the Japanese university entrance examination system with regards to its contribution to maintaining an individual university's prestige (LoCastro, 1990;

Mori, 2002), advancing socio-economic status (Kariya & Dore, 2006; Sasaki, 2008; Sato, 2002; Takeuchi, 1997), reproducing social hierarchies (Frost, 1991 ; Seargeant, 2008; Takeuchi, 1997), and providing a needed source of revenue (Kinmonth, 2005). Research also exists on the proliferation of "shadow educational institutions", or cram schools/*juku*, that support and are supported by this system (Blumenthal, 1992; Cook, 2012; McVeigh, 2006; Rohlen, 1980; Sasaki, 2008; Stevenson & Baker, 1992; Tsukada, 1988).

Studies also abound on the extensive influence of entrance examinations on the entire system of English education in Japan (Law, 1995; Matsumoto, 1994; Scholefield, 1997; Yoshida, 2003), their detrimental effects on students' motivation and ability to learn and use living English (Honna, 2005; Seargeant, 2008), the difficulties in reforming such a system (Doyon, 2001) and the fact that these entrance examinations are generally not written by experts in testing (Aspinall, 2005).

Criticism of the content of these examinations has also been the subject of research, particularly with regards to which "standard" of English is being tested, the use of archaic vocabulary and structures, and the overall difficulty of reading passages (Brown & Yamashita, 1995; Kikuchi, 2006; LoCastro, 1990), as well as the types of tasks commonly occurring on examinations (Kikuchi, 2006). Examinations are also cited as a main reason for Japanese teachers' of English (JTEs) continuing to use traditional, grammar-translation-based teaching practices (Cook, 2010; Sakui, 2004; Sato, 2002; Sato & Kleinsasser, 2004; Wada, 2002).

Critics argue that many of these criticisms are no longer valid since an increasing number of university English examinations are calling for applicants to demonstrate more ability at solving task-based, higher-order problems, and show less ability to translate and solve discrete-item problems (Guest, 2000; Mulvey, 2001). They also assert that claims of examination

washback on the teaching of English in Japan have been greatly exaggerated, since teaching and textbooks appear not to be have been influenced by these innovations on tests (Mori, 2002; Mulvey, 2001). Innovative tasks, such as "… open ended explanation, translation, paraphrasing, and listening tasks, as well as short essay writing components" (Guest, 2008, p. 16) also appear to be attempts at improving test validity and reliability. Nevertheless, a number of respondents in this study mentioned validity and reliability largely being unaddressed at their instititutions (Cook, in press-b).

Characteristics of Good Language Tests: Validity and Reliability

According to Hughes (2003), a "(language) test is said to be valid if it measures accurately what we intend to measure" (p. 26). He recommends writing explicit specifications for the test and including a representative sample of the content of the test; using direct testing methods; and ensuring that scoring of responses relates directly to what is being tested (Hughes, 2003).

But, are entrance examinations in Japan *language tests*? If they are, then in theory they should, according to Hughes (2003), be one of four types: proficiency, achievement, diagnostic, or placement (p. 11). In this study, almost all expatriate English instructors held at least an M.A. or M.Ed., and 67% of them took courses in testing and assessment; thus it can be assumed that they have some degree of familiarity with these kinds of tests, as well as their purposes and construction, and would therefore believe that their university's English entrance examination should fall into one or more of these pedagogically-oriented categories.

However, perhaps none of these typologies can be applied to English entrance examinations in Japan, because such exams, as I have argued elsewhere, may be seen as serving, in addition to or as opposed to, pedagogical purposes (Cook, 2013).

Purpose of the Research

This particular study forms part of a large, nationwide survey of expatriate English-teaching tertiary institution faculty and their participation in and beliefs about their institution's entrance examinations. The main study examined expatriate ELT faculty member roles, opinions about, and attempts at reforming entrance examinations. This particular study focuses on two questions:

1) What constrains and facilitates improvement by expatriate, English-teaching faculty to entrance examinations?

2) If improvement is deemed necessary, how can it be accomplished most successfully?

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected first via online survey and then by follow-up open-ended interviews based on survey respondents' answers. Due the wide-ranging nature of the project, an online survey was felt to be the most efficient for soliciting an initially large number of responses, and attaining the language of participants (Creswell, 2009). The questionnaire was available on SurveyMonkey from October 27, 2010 to January 31, 2011. Snowball sampling (Dornyei, 2003) was used largely through social networking websites and e-mail solicitations to friends, Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT) chapters and special interest groups (SIGs). The questionnaire asked respondents to give demographic information, talk about their role in entrance examination creation at their institution, give general information about test design, and share their opinions and beliefs about English entrance examinations in general. Respondents agreeing to participate in a follow-up interview were contacted and interviewed via Skype or telephone.

Because not all participants answered all questions, thus limiting generalizability of results, qualitative methods of data analysis were deemed most appropriate. The strategy of inquiry for this study was largely grounded theory (Creswell, 2009). For this part of the study, Cresswell's (2009) generic guide for analysis and interpretation was followed. Data were collected and prepared for analysis and audio-recordings were transcribed. Data were then read through to gain a general impression of ideas and tone, and typed cases were prepared for all participants. Using NVivo qualitative coding software, material was organized into chunks (words or groups of words referring to a theme), and coding processes were used to generate themes for analysis (Bringer, Johnston, & Brackenridge, 2004). Finally, emergent themes were identified. The Appendix includes a list of questions that respondents addressed for this part of the study.

In order to protect the anonymity of participants, pseudonyms have been used. As Table 1 indicates, all come from British/Australasian/North American (BANA) countries (Holliday, 1994) and all but two (Debbie and Mauve) are male.

Table 1

Participants

Pseudonym	Nationality	Years teaching in Japan	Type of University
Arthur	American	6-10	National
Carlos	Canadian	6-10	Private
Debbie	American	21-30	National

Diogenes	American	31-40	Private
Jack	Australian	1-5	National
James	American	21-30	Private
Joe	American	11-20	National
Mauve	American	6-10	Private
Mike	British	11-20	Private
Paul	British	21-30	Private
Peter	British	6-10	Public
Phil	American	1-5	National

Results

Before presenting the results, it is important to state that this research highlights the *beliefs and opinions* of expatriate foreign faculty and that, perhaps due to factors such as the implicit nature of Japanese culture and the positioning of expatriate foreign faculty as *soto muki* (outward facing) in their universities (Poole, 2010), as well as the fact that the majority of them have not been raised or educated in Japan or Japanese institutions, it may be that they don't have the same access to information as their local colleagues do. As a result, the cultural/educational backgrounds of expatriates as well as the possibility of their having an incomplete knowledge of all circumstances surrounding the system of entrance examinations in Japan, may influence their beliefs and opinions (Cook, in press-a).

Factors inhibiting improvement

Hierarchical structures

A number of respondents said that attempts to improve tests (for example, by doing statistical analysis on items) was difficult because they felt those in senior positions disagreed with change. James, for instance, felt that decisions about test-making "have to do with power and who has power within the university." Mauve felt that "seniority and personal power trump expertise", thus older faculty members, who in her words are "set in their ways… prefer the way things have always been done." Diogenes said he'd heard "some comments from some people who were not much listened to … because they're younger and radical." Thus, tests are unlikely to be improved unless initiatives are taken by people at the higher end of the faculty hierarchy.

Face

The potential loss of face for those at the top of the hierarchy if innovations were implemented on their examinations was another factor precluding change. For Diogenes, this loss of face was an issue that came up when the discussion turned to introducing statistical analysis to entrance examinations at an institution at which he was formerly employed:

> I think there were the same social pressures not to stand out… I think the same thing is affecting the introduction of statistics, looking at examination statistics, because some people are very much into this and they've done a lot of preparation and they've done statistics at school and they've done research papers involved with statistics, and other people don't know the first thing about it. And so, there's a great difference in level of sophistication of what this is all about. And as it happens, the people who are higher up in administration are the ones who don't know much about this sort of thing. It's a face-saving device, I think.

Fear

In addition to hierarchy and face, for Jack, fear was another factor that prevented change from happening to examinations at his institution due to the possibility of problems occurring as a result of reforms to examinations:

> ... it (the test) has to go through other people who may be non-academics or non-practicing teachers who have their own situation and their own position to protect, and one way they do this is relying on what they consider to be a normal practice… and these people have a fair amount of clout… and nobody wants to lose face… it's a big hassle to try to persuade these other people to change their views and if they're changing, they're moving into something potentially dangerous because it could go wrong…

Concerns about continuity

One concern raised by several respondents was whether an innovation would persist after its initial implementation, especially after the originator left the committee or institution. At Mike's university, critical thinking questions he'd introduced were initially taken on board favourably, but abandoned once his mandate on the committee was over. Whether or not to continue using a new type of question introduced by a Japanese colleague was also the subject of some discussion at Debbie's institution: "We talked about it last year, whether or not to keep it, because this colleague retired… then somebody had to take on bringing in that question."

No need for change

Responding to the question, "Have innovations been introduced into your university's English entrance examination in the last 10 years", almost 60% percent of respondents said, "No". The most common answer for this included "No perceived need." One anonymous respondent wrote, "Change is difficult when there is no apparent problem with the existing format." For Mike, this comes down to expatriate faculty feeling a need to make improvements to existing entrance examinations, while such a need is not felt, in his view, by Japanese colleagues:

> … native speakers… because this is kind of their job to be on the committee, they have a sense that, "I should do this well, as I've been trained." Whereas the Japanese teachers don't see that as being necessary and objectively they are right. These changes are not necessary under present conditions. That's simply a fact.

Factors Facilitating Change

Consensus

Consensus was one oft-cited factor facilitating innovation on entrance examinations. On the on-line survey, after "expatriate faculty", "the examination committee" was listed as being responsible for innovation on entrance examinations. According to Phil, "Everyone in our department adds something, adds some small part or [has] gradually been changing how the test has been done over several years." Joe, in speaking of innovation on his institution's examination, uses the words "we" and "our" claiming the group's ownership in decision-making: "We're always looking to change it mainly so that *jukus* (cram schools) can't get too much of a hold on what our entrance exam is like."

An opening

Carlos revealed how he was offered a chance by the examination committee to create test items as he deemed appropriate. Because that offer was accepted, his term on the committee was satisfactory for him:

> … it's not like they asked me to make the test better; it's just that they said, 'Okay, you're on the committee. What would you like to do?' And I put up my hand and said, 'I'll do the reading section if you don't mind'… I came in the next week and the writing section wasn't really done yet, so I said, 'Well, I'll start on this as well, if you don't mind'…

However, related to the previous inhibiting factor of continuity, he said, "On the other hand, if I hadn't done that, I'm sure nothing would have changed."

Hierarchical structures

As was shown previously, although hierarchical structures can constrain innovation, they can also facilitate it. At Mauve's institution, some senior committee members "…are open to innovation, and if they are persuasive enough - and have no real enemies on the committee - occasionally things do change." At Joe's institution, committee members at the top of the hierarchy were content to hand the reins over to junior members who were knowledgeable about testing. He wrote:

(Innovation) was felt necessary because the older tests were discrete-point and a few of the younger teachers (both local and expatriate) who had a good grasp of applied linguistics and testing theory were responsible for introducing the innovation… Some of the older teachers are obligated to be on the committee, but they don't want to do the work. And that's fine. They take a back-seat role… they don't want the hassle that comes with it, so it works.

Discussion

With regards to factors constraining innovation, respondents seem to understand correctly that hierarchical structures prevail in Japanese organizations and that "older members have more power, earn more, and are considered more knowledgeable, even if this is not really the case" (Haghirian, 2010, p. 14), and, thus, have a say in whether or not innovation is to occur. Group harmony forces Japanese people to save, not only their own, but the face of others (Alston & Takei, 2005) as well, and fear may come from the fact that groups try to avoid risk in order to protect that face; by doing so, however, group members feel more secure (Haghirian, 2010, p. 80).

Regarding factors facilitating innovation, as pointed out by respondents in this study, consensus may be the single most important factor in effecting change. According to Haghirian (2010), it "is the reason why processes, once established, will hardly be individually improved or changed, even if a process proves inefficient or even damaging to the firm. Without group consensus, nothing can be changed… (p. 100).

Recommendations

In light of the above, what can be done by expatriate ELT faculty members who would like to make changes to their institutions' entrance examinations? The following section offers a possible list of questions expatriate entrance examination committee members might want to ask themselves before embarking on a course of innovation.

1. What is the Purpose of your Institution's Entrance Examination?

The first order of business is to find out if the entrance examination is, in fact, considered to be a language test. If the majority of local colleagues believe it is something other than a language test, such as a tool for social stratification, an indication of students' general intelligence, proof of students' ability to take tests, a tool for public relations, or a source of funding, then expatriate faculty members may have to work harder to make a case for change. However, if colleagues do believe it is a language test, the task might be easier. However, given the secrecy and sensitivity surrounding entrance examinations in general, this may be difficult to ascertain from local colleagues and may have to be handled delicately.

2. Why do you Feel a Need to Change your Test?

Mike sees no clear benefit to changing his university's English entrance examination. Although he acknowledges the general benefits of good testing, he can't see that his university would be advantaged in any way by changing its test:

> I don't disagree with J.D. Brown or Tim Murphey in the sense that if there's a better test, that's surely a good thing, but there isn't an advantage to a better test. What would be

the advantage? The only thing you could potentially gain would be if your current system is not getting the kind of students that you want to have and you think you can make a test that will get them. But you won't be able to do that, because people won't try to take your exam if they think your university… doesn't have the status or whatever it is, **…** so making a better test has no meaning that I can see outside of just feeling good that we've got a test that measures something.

In other words, we need to ask ourselves if our tests are already doing what they should be doing and if they are, whether they really need to change.

3. What is the Expatriate's Role on the Test Committee?

Jack told me he felt largely excluded from decision-making processes at his institution generally, and felt very frustrated because no one, local and expatriate teachers included, seemed to be listening to him:

I was told that I would have to look at materials which other people were making… we ended up with about 80 pages of stuff including all the reading texts and everything … and they kept asking me "Is this correct? Is this correct? And I said, "Yeah, but if you also look at the questions, the questions don't relate to the text at all". You can't have questions asking about the phonemes for a written text. There's no connection. And somebody looked at me [and said] "This is what we always do." And I said, "I'm on the committee now, and I'm telling you that this makes no sense."

During our interview as I sought to make clear Jack's roles and responsibilities on the entrance examination committee, I realized that he was acting as a proofreader, but he felt that as a committee member he was entitled to express any views about the test he had.

In "Values in English language teaching", Johnston (2003) writes about a fundamental tension in ELT professionalism: that although many teachers strive to be professionals, their aspirations are not reflected in the way their work is perceived by those around them. In other words, there is a disjuncture between what can be called *claimed* identity and *assigned* identity (p. 108).

Jack, disclaiming his assigned identity on the entrance examination committee, was perhaps unknowingly doing himself a disservice. By not accepting his assigned identity and following Japanese custom, he might have been pitting himself against his colleagues, thus ensuring that his voice would not be heard. According to Haghirian (2010):

> Being successful in a Japanese team means being more passive and listening to older peers. In the context of a Japanese firm, being active in finding a role and taking on an independent task is considered very inappropriate in general and unheard of for beginners. This behaviour often leads to intercultural conflict (p. 101).

While it may not be appropriate to call Jack a "beginner", his status as "native speaker checker" might have been viewed quite differently from his colleagues' role as question creators.

4. **Who can Help Make the Case for Change?**

It is unlikely that individuals can effect change on their own in Japanese institutions.

Haghirian (2010) tells the story of Laura Kriska, an American woman who worked for a Japanese automobile company and wished to make a case for the company to abandon a rule prescribing that only female employees wear uniforms. Kriska was advised to form a quality circle and with this group, was successful in obtaining a policy change by the company.

As mentioned previously, consensus is very important; rarely in the Japanese context, are suggestions by single individuals accepted easily. Thus, if expatriate faculty want to make changes to examinations, they might want to enlist the help of other like-minded colleagues and make their own quality circles. Because hierarchy is also key, proposals might more likely be accepted if some members of the quality circle are higher up in the hierarchy and have decision-making power.

5. How can Others be Convinced that Change is Needed?

Convincing others that change is needed is also important. Making negative comments about existing formats may cause colleagues to lose face; thus, it is recommended that a concrete and well-reasoned plan of change is made. Carlos, for example, was able to implement changes, as mentioned above, because he went to his committee with clear pedagogical reasons for modification. Another strategy is to appeal to the face of the university in some way since public image and reputation are paramount. As Mike suggests:

> There's something to be said, just sheer pride and professionalism to create a really good test, and that's the best way to pitch it. If you just say, "Look, we should do it because universities in Japan have a bad reputation and are not in the top 100 in the world, so here's something we can do to make it more professional and better."

This point about finding a positive spin for the change is critical. Jack, who told his committee that their questions didn't "make sense" may have chosen an unfortunate tactic. Expressing disagreement in a negative manner may be considered a violation of group harmony by local colleagues, which may have resulted in his perceived rejection by the group (Alston & Takei, 2005).

6. Who will Share of the Burden of Change?

Although Carlos was able to successfully implement changes to his institution's entrance examination, he said that had he not offered to do so, the test would have been in his words**,** the "same old, same old"**,** meaning that those who seek to implement changes will generally be responsible for them over the short or long term. Debbie and Mike earlier brought up the issue of continuity of innovation. At Debbie's institution, it was decided that the new type of question introduced by a previous committee member was too good to abandon, and so responsibility for it was passed on to another committee member, yet at Mike's, as he said, the innovation was abandoned once he was no longer on the committee. Thus, expatriate ELT faculty have to ask themselves**,** when they are asking for change, if their proposals will be accepted only during their tenure on the committee or for a longer period of time. If change is implemented, can the burden of such innovations be placed on colleagues when some expatriates are replaced on committees? And, as Jack's case shows, can changes be asked for if expatriates are not responsible for creating questions in the first place?

7. How Long are Expatriate ELT Faculty Members Willing to Wait for Change?

Peter, in discussing change to his institution's entrance examination felt that gentle persuasion would be required as well as time. He is correct in that change does not occur quickly. In a book about Japanese business practices (Alston & Takei, 2005), the authors state that**:**

> Because of their fear of failure, Japanese are content with small victories. When change takes place in Japan, it generally takes place in small steps after careful study and consensus building. This of course takes time but fits the Japanese risk-averse preference…. Foreigners who wish to do business with Japanese should offer smaller proposals at first. The proposals should also be presented as continuation of the past rather than an abrupt break from tradition…. It is always easier to add to a policy than to ask Japanese managers to consider adopting new policies. (p. 89).

Thus, expatriate entrance examination committee members will need to offer suggestions in small doses, acknowledge past formats as they seek to change present ones, take a long-term view, and will need to be patient.

Conclusion

Although a one-size-fits-all recommendation for change to entrance examinations in Japan or other countries is beyond the scope of this paper, it is hoped that the above will be helpful to those seeking to improve entrance examinations at their institutions. Like many expatriate English-teaching faculty living in Japan, this author has more questions than answers and is still struggling to find ways to improve the quality of her work. While this research project has yielded a great deal of information and has helped her understand more about the lives of

expatriate English-teaching faculty, and thus feel a stronger part of that community, these findings are the tip of the iceberg. Indeed, they may be helpful not only to expatriate English-teaching faculty in Japan, but to any expatriate faculty members responsible for test creation in any country, since the recommendations mentioned here might be useful to expatriates seeking to improve language tests that might have a long history and that might be used differently from those in the expatriate's country of origin.

The results of this study may also be useful for those teaching graduate students about testing and assessment. In addition to teaching content about testing and what constitutes good tests, teacher educators may also turn a critical eye to their beliefs and highlight those aspects, which, while appropriate in one culture, may have limited applicability or suitability in another.

Lastly, an obvious recommendation for future research is to conduct a similar study with local English-teaching faculty to see if there is any correspondence between their opinions and those of their expatriate colleagues. Such an insider view of entrance examinations-would invaluable to expatriate colleagues who would benefit from their experience and expertise.

Throughout this research project, my own knowledge of and beliefs about the purposes of English on entrance examinations at Japanese universities has been challenged considerably and although I can't help but continue to advocate for the construction of valid and reliable tests, I realize that I must not position myself as an "expert" on testing on the grounds of having taken a few courses on assessment in graduate school. I must work with my local colleagues to make the best tests possible for the purposes my institution deems appropriate and, where I see a case for reform, make it in such a way that its benefits are perceived by all stakeholders. Although the tradition of testing may seem like an impenetrable barrier, I believe local colleagues are interested in what expatriate colleagues have to say, and that test improvement, where warranted,

is possible.

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Appendix

Questions addressed by respondents related to this study

Section	Questions
Innovation on your university's entrance examination.	◦ Have innovations (paragraph writing, etc.) been introduced into your university's English entrance examination in the last 10 years? ◦ (If "yes") What kind of innovations were introduced? ◦ Why was it felt that an innovation was necessary? ◦ Who was responsible for introducing the innovation? ◦ Was the introduction of the innovation successful and permanent? ◦ (If "no") Why haven't innovations been introduced?
Overall opinions	◦ Overall, do you agree that your university's entrance examination is an effective measure for entrance examination is an effective measure for selecting students to attend your university?

◦ What do you believe would improve the

effectiveness of your university's entrance

examination?

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